

Strategy Research Project

U.S. GRAND STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

BY

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ABSTRACT

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In today's changing international environment, U.S. military power remains unparalleled. But, if the United States makes "going it alone" a predominate foreign policy; we may suffer a consequence with an aggressive adversary trying to shift the balance of power. The right approach to grand strategy is vital to winning the War on Terror. In defending against aggressors targeting the United States, a question is raised as to how can we best mix hard and soft power within a coherent strategic framework? U.S. grand strategy should retain unilateral intervention and preemption as options. Preemption is in question because of disagreement about the resolve of states that could participate in or use dangerous weapons of mass destruction (WMD). On the other hand, dissuading rogue states or non-state actors early may be the best approach. Soft power alone offers little certainty for protecting and defending against national security threats. This paper analyzes the limits and benefits of using soft power and hard power in crafting an effective multilateral or unilateral intervention against terrorism within a coherent strategic framework.

U.S. GRAND STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

A mixture of hard and soft power within a coherent strategic framework is essential. Such a coherent strategy will preserve U.S. standing in the world while decreasing its security vulnerabilities for years to come. While the United States is the most powerful country in the world, there are limits to that power for protecting our interests. We saw the limits to U.S. power in a series of significant attacks: the truck bombing of the World Trade Center; the attack on Khobar Towers; the bombing of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; the strike on the USS Cole; and the attacks of 9/11.¹ As a result, our approach to national security was reshaped and military strategy was changed to strengthen our counterterrorism capabilities.² A debate persists about the benefits and costs associated with U.S. unilateral intervention and the emphasis on hard power as the primary foreign policy approach. A cost to our foreign policy approach is seen in world opinion about America's image. A study by the Council on Foreign Relations in 2003 concluded that many people around the world see the U.S. as "arrogant, hypocritical, self-absorbed, self-indulgent, and contemptuous of others." This study further cites that Anti-Americanism is endangering our national security and compromising the effectiveness of our diplomacy.³

I argue for maintaining direct measures of hard power to inform U.S. grand strategy in confronting the security challenges of terrorism. U.S. grand strategy should retain unilateral intervention and preemption as primary options. This paper discusses the limited influence that soft power has on national security protection in the current volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. I will support my

argument by examining the limits and benefits of hard and soft power as coordinated with a unilateral or multilateral approach as options for engagement.

The Right Approach to Grand Strategy

Hard power is a concept that describes using military and economic means to influence the behavior or interests of other political bodies. In *Soft Power*, Joseph S. Nye defines hard power as the ability to use carrots and sticks of economic and military might for inducements or threats to make others follow your will.⁴ Economic and military power can be used to influence or threaten other people and country's position once taken. Hard power contrasts with soft power, which refers to power that comes from diplomacy, culture, and history.⁵ Soft power is based on intangibles or indirect influences and is essential as it enables the United States to persuade other nations to its way of thinking.⁶ As such, soft power depends on willing receivers. The National Security Strategy (NSS) of March 2006, as did the NSS of September 2002, identifies rogue states and transnational terrorist networks as the principal threats to U.S. security interests.⁷ Grand strategy integrates military, political, and economic means to pursue America's critical objectives in the international system.⁸ There is little consensus on the appropriate grand strategy for the United States. Strategy is driven by changes in administrations as well as changes in the national security environment. Since power is relative to influence and the United States has limited world-wide influence with soft power, then soft power alone cannot be used effectively to maintain U.S. national security.

With unilateralism a country can promote its own agenda throughout the world without necessarily experiencing any particular consequences. Unilateralism can allow

the U.S. to set high standards for the rest of the world to follow. With multilateralism, the costs are higher, but the benefits may exceed the costs. A benefit for multilateral intervention is asserting attractive American values that could bind us to other states.⁹ However, there are times when multilateralism is not beneficial to the United States. For example, when confronting incidents of vital survival interests with other organizations, it is not beneficial to rely on organizations such as the United Nations. Multilateralists need to be pragmatic in acknowledging the limits of the U.N.'s operational role. The U.N. has numerous strengths, but conducting major military operations is not one of them.¹⁰

The United States clearly has the potential to be the dominant hard power in the world and is also a leading economic power. Our economic standing is being challenged by the economies of rising nations such as China, Russia, and India. Our soft power is far less dominant in the world as measured by positive influence among other countries. A Zogby poll conducted in September 2006 showed that overall attitudes toward the U.S. have worsened and negative attitudes have hardened. Additionally, attitudes toward American values, people, and culture have declined.¹¹ A 2007 Zogby poll measured the favorable impression of the U.S. with Arab countries that are considered allies of the United States. The U.S. received very low ratings among this group as related to U.S. intervention in Iraq.¹² Soft power rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes preferences.¹³ Bush's National Security Strategy specifies a legal basis for preemption with a preference for preempting multilaterally versus unilaterally. In "A Grand Strategy of Transformation" John Lewis Gaddis supports Bush's strategy. Gaddis points out that despite problems and

uncertainty, Bush is right on target with his NSS in defining the challenging circumstances confronting the U.S. with an appropriate national security strategy.¹⁴

A vital U.S. national security interest is to prevent enemies from threatening the United States and its allies with weapons of mass destruction.¹⁵ The national security environment has changed so drastically that a grand strategy is needed that will respond effectively to emerging security threats. The United States and our allies face challenges of transnational extremist networks, hostile states armed with WMD, and emerging space and cyber threats. Defense Secretary Gates advocates a Department of Defense ready to respond to these challenges.¹⁶ Given the current international climate, the use of soft power offers a weak strategic solution for achieving U.S. national security defense. Hard power provides the best approach for emerging challenges.

Approaches for Engagement

Isolationism, unilateralism, and multilateralism are three main approaches for engaging the world.¹⁷ Isolationism is not a serious consideration in policy formulation today. The primary debate is between the unilateral and the multilateral approaches to foreign policy. Both are considered internationalists as opposed to isolationists. Unilateralists believe that the U.S. should assert American values and should bring democracy to the world. Unilateralists believe that American hegemony is benevolent and emphasizes protectionism.¹⁸ Unilateralists believe that the U.S. should aggressively assert hard power when survival interests are at stake. Whether to use a unilateral or multilateral approach needs to consider our vulnerability to an imminent threat and the effect of international disfavor with a unilateral response to the threat. U.S. membership in multilateral institutions such as the U.N. and NATO assuages some fears of nations

concerning the use of unilateral power. Critics of a unilateral approach believe that the United States risks a decreasing status of influence by the international community by using this approach as the primary intervention for foreign policy. However, multilateralists believe that in defensive approaches against terrorism, there is a benefit to not waging war alone.¹⁹ I support that national security defense would be best served by using hard power in a unilateral approach whenever survival interests are at stake.

Global terror is the subversion of traditional ways of war because it does not care about the sovereignty of either its enemies or the allies who shelter them.²⁰ Most insurgency fighters rely on unconventional forces, tactics, and strategies. Groups such as al Qaeda are non-state actors who have the potential to exploit and use low-cost technology in order to unleash devastating destruction with weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Moreover, with the possibility of striking anywhere and anytime, these groups are difficult to detect, deter, and predict.²¹

Instantaneous global communications have enhanced globalization which has diffused knowledge and power around the world.²² Global communications can adversely affect national security through the exploitation of information systems for: the conduct of wars; terrorism; the procurement of weapon systems; as well as for intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination.²³ Because the United States has not fully developed the use of soft power to influence the international community, other nation states and non-state actors have exploited the global communications network to their advantage.

Hard power offers a value for disrupting and destroying terrorist organizations. The full influence of the United States should be used to make clear to the world that

acts of terrorism are illegitimate. The use of hard power in unilateral action, to include preemptive strikes, is consistent with protective powers that lead to greater security for everyone. Hard power approaches against terrorist organizations consist of coercive diplomacy, military coercion, and deterrence.²⁴

The primary theme of the National Security Strategy (NSS), 2006, is to continue the shift from cold war strategies toward a multilateral approach to foreign policy. Bush advocated a willingness to use preemptive strikes, as outlined for the first time in NSS, 2002, to defend our national interests and those of the international community.²⁵ The emphasis on preemptive strike remains the most controversial aspect of the NSS. Critics complain that continued reliance on the military instrument of power, combined with preemptive strike is unsustainable from economic, political, and military measures. Critics and advocates of unilateral and multilateral approaches point out that it is more an issue over degree as to the best approach for the U.S.²⁶ Therefore, in instances of imminent threats to America's vital interests and to our national security, the U.S. should proceed with a unilateral hard power approach. Bush's NSS provides a justification for use of military power to deter near-term and long-term threats. However, his strategy recognizes that the U.S. has limits to its national power and seeks to provide a balance between hard and soft power in order to achieve U.S. security goals and objectives.

Conversely, critics point out that America's use of hard power can adversely affect our soft power advantage if a unilateralist position is used predominately as in the U.S. rejection of the Kyoto Treaty.²⁷ The war in Iraq demonstrates both U.S. dominance and its limits of power. Though the U.S. won the Iraq war militarily (regime change), we need international help to ensure that Iraq becomes and remains a stable, peaceful

country. International collaboration is also crucial to other global challenges, such as terrorism and global warming. The first term of George W. Bush's presidency was marked by unilateralism and military power. It is not disputed that there has not been another terrorist attack within America's borders since the attacks of 9/11. Nye points out that it is too early to evaluate Bush's second term foreign policy strategies.²⁸ However, Bush articulated, in his 2006 NSS a recognition of the importance of soft power and diplomacy.²⁹ With 9/11, America was attacked not by a single nation or band of nations with large armies, but by ill-defined organizations using modern technology that was capable of great destruction at a tiny economic cost to them. These groups are not easily deterred as death is often a means to their end. Preemption, as the NSS concludes is, therefore, an essential facet in dealing with terrorists.³⁰

Henry Kissinger points out in that the world is now more complex and the U.S. needs a flexible foreign policy to handle the various situations that are assured to arise.³¹ Kissinger cites four situations around the world today where a mix of hard and soft power is critical for advancing peaceful international relations. The four situations are:

United States versus Western Europe where wars are inconceivable except for fringed ethnic conflicts;

United States versus Asia where war is not generally imminent but not inconceivable;

United States versus Middle East where roots are ideological and religious. Westphalian concepts do not apply and compromise is elusive since most conflict is based on the existence of various divergent viewpoints such as with the Arab/Israeli conflict

United States versus Africa where colonial rule has left a legacy of ethnic conflict which has resulted in serious underdevelopment, dehumanizing health problems, and the ability to take advantage of potential resources.³²

Critical national strategic documents for assessing security issues include the National Defense Strategy 2008 (NDS), Quadrennial Defense Review 2006 (QDR), National Strategy on Combating Terrorism 2006, and the National Security Strategy 2006. Security strategy is the most important issue that the United States confronts, especially in a time of war. Bush emphasized in his NSS, that his most solemn obligation is to protect the security of the American people, advance American interests, enhance global security, and expand global liberty and prosperity.³³ His National Security Strategy is characterized in two pillars:

The first pillar promotes freedom, justice, and human dignity-working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies, and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies.

The second pillar deals with the challenges of leading a growing community of democracies.³⁴

Examples of new security challenges include public health pandemics that recognize no borders, illicit trade whether in drugs, human beings, or sex, that exploits the greater ease of transport and exchange. Other new challenges that threaten national security include environmental disasters such as floods and earthquakes. Establishing the Department of Homeland Security is one major step the U.S. has taken in the last four years to transform key national security institutions in order to maximize response capabilities. Another security transformation includes launching the most significant reorganization of the intelligence community since the 1947 National Security Act.³⁵ Grand strategy seeks to protect and advance U.S. national interests with ends, ways, and means that will lead to desirable outcomes. International security challenges affecting America's vital interests include international terrorism, organized crime, and

the proliferation of WMD. Soft power is not a proven means to deal with these complex challenges.

Military Means and Risks

The United States clearly holds the dominant hard power advantage in the world today and we have used this advantage to promote and protect U.S. values. However, there are circumstances when U.S. values collide with what we can do to promote or protect those values. Given the size of the U.S., we have more of a margin of choice on use of our elements of power to protect our national interests than most countries have. We still must be prudent in how we use our power. For example, atrocities that occurred in Chechnya challenged our values for human rights. We were constrained from intervening because of tenuous relations with Russia. Steven Pifer, in a report to the U.S. Helsinki Commission at the time, stated that, “continuing instability in Chechnya complicates both the Global War on Terrorism and attempts to improve relations with Russian Federation.”³⁶ Russia is a nuclear power and the U.S. relies on them for aid in fighting terrorism. Due to undeveloped soft power, the U.S. finds it difficult to perform its needed function in the world.³⁷ It is doubtful that the U.S. can use soft power to influence international behavior when vital interests are at risk.

The National Security Strategy builds on its predecessors and continues the evolution from strategies developed during the Cold War with a policy of continued global engagement.³⁸ Flexibility and selectively applied, U.S. military power still remains an essential factor in assuring national security. The strategy of global engagement addresses the challenges of interacting in a changing and complex international environment. A crucial element of global engagement is power projection. Power

projection is the ability of a nation to apply all or some of its elements of national power. These elements include diplomatic, information, military, political, and economics processes to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain forces in and from multiple dispersed locations. Power projection enables the ability to respond to crises, to contribute to deterrence, and to enhance regional stability.³⁹

While traditional measures of power projection typically focus on hard power assets such as tanks, Soldiers, aircraft, naval vessels; soft power involvement does not necessarily involve the use of active forces. However, assets for power projection can often serve dual uses of hard and soft power such as with the deployment of military forces to assist with humanitarian efforts after natural disasters. Power projection can serve as an effective instrument for hard and soft power. An example of dual soft and hard power utilization is deploying military forces to assist in disasters as an effective diplomatic lever while influencing the decision-making process and acting as a deterrent to prevent covert terrorist activity from taking advantage of the circumstances.⁴⁰

Economic Means and Risks

Accelerating technological advances and market expansion have combined to break down traditional international barriers and has created a world of increasing economic, social, and cultural interdependence. Historic small nation-states, aware that their size is insufficient to play a major global role, are seeking to group themselves into larger units to offset their lack of power.⁴¹ Their emphasis on military power is impossible to sustain and has led them to economic and technological revolution. The North Atlantic Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the European Union (EU), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are examples of nation-state groups

joining to improve their international influence and power. World-wide economic power can play a part to overcome traditional national barriers. Economic power which relies on aid, bribes, and economic sanctions can also be used in order to induce and coerce.

As Harvey Sicherman points out in *Cheap Hawks, Cheap Doves, and the Pursuit of Strategy*, the front is everywhere. Terrorists are adept at exploiting weak or failing states, making alliances of convenience with stronger states, and operating in democratic societies whose tolerance they abuse. Terrorism injects an even greater element of chaotic uncertainty into international relationships of interdependence.⁴² Globalization has made it easier for terrorists to identify and reach targets as well as publicizing their cause more widely than was possible in the in the past. Jihadist terror will continue to become more decentralized, but it will not wane, not even after the core of al Qaeda is dismantled. With al Qaeda waning, the larger terrorist threat from radical Islamists lies with Al Qaeda-inspired or trained groups pe se, but with ad hoc groups bent on disruption.⁴³

With regards to security threats brought about by weak states, situations of crime, ethnic conflict, economic deficits, and disease can increase opportunities for those groups who will exploit these situations to increase their power. Globalization has helped terrorist groups by facilitating the speed and ease with which money can move around the world and be laundered. Corruption stretches deep into sensitive government agencies in many countries. For a country's drug trade to flourish, some government officials and their police are corrupted. The Americas and Western Europe faces economic national security threats. Africa's ethnic conflict, economic

underdevelopment, and epidemic disease provide a lower level of threat to America's geopolitical interests.⁴⁴

Political Means and Risks

Creating and implementing a relevant U.S. grand strategy includes recommendations and policies developed by the president, executive branch, interagency process, intelligence community, and other key entities affecting the national security strategy. The key national security components of the executive branch include the Department of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and the Intelligence Community. The War on Terrorism is fought on many fronts, both foreign and domestic. The Department of Homeland Security was created with wide-ranging domestic security responsibilities. A basis assumption is that the threat of terrorism will continue which will require national, state, and local coordination. The goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan for homeland security are to meet national security challenges and take advantage of the opportunities to build threat capabilities.

Homeland security includes: overall preparedness; strengthening border security and interior enforcement and reform immigration processes; enhancing information sharing with our partners; improving financial management; human resource development, procurement and information technology; and realigning the Departments organization to maximize mission performance.⁴⁵

The ultimate challenge to America's security is the rise of religious fundamentalism and extremism. Another major challenge is the weakening of the nation state. This coincides with the weakening of world institutions such as the U.N. and NATO. There is also what is referred to as the dark side of globalization. Interconnectedness has shown its negative aspects.⁴⁶ Among the many challenges to our national security caused by interconnectedness include international terrorism,

organized crime, proliferation of WMD, asymmetric threats from proxy actors, and the abuse of financial and energy resources. Migration continues to provide challenges to the U.S. with immigration problems contributing to border security issues as well as dramatic diseases such as HIV/AIDS which have the potential to spread faster than ever before. Threats from the dark side of globalization are wide in scale and extraordinary in complexity.

Charles Maynes describes three different approaches to the issue of America's place in the world. He discusses ways in which the U.S. can interact with the international community. His ideas have relevance for how America engages using hard or soft power to achieve foreign policy objectives. Three approaches have emerged as appropriate for America's role in international relations. They are as: controller, shaper, and abstainer.⁴⁷ The controller seeks to control the international system. Its proponents think that it is in the best interest of America to use its immense power not only to make America the leader of the international system but to dominate it. The shapers believe that leading is more important than dominating and advocate that America should be cautious about the use of power. Abstainers believe that America can scale down its active role in the world and can trust the laws of natural balance for keeping peace in the world. Each perspective strives to place America within a dynamic system that will provide for security. The role that affords the greatest amount of security for America is to create a balance using control and shaper attributes.

The Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, defined the principles of the modern nation-state and created rules for state sovereignty.⁴⁸ Sovereignty of the state allowed that: others could not interfere with a state's domestic institutions; domestic rulers were

less likely to arbitrarily use force to impose their ideas on other states; balance of power between states established restraints by creating equilibrium between states before a state got too powerful and confined wars to limited areas (until the Allied nations that came together to defeat the Central and Axis Powers in WWI and WWII); and wars were generally fought to gain dominion over territory and to impose an ideology on the conquered people.⁴⁹ With violent religious terrorists, these concepts simply do not apply. The nation-state remains a unit of political accountability, but it is changing based on breakdowns along ethnic components.⁵⁰

National security defense falls under the purview of the Department of Defense and involves the protection and defense of U.S. territories, its people, and critical infrastructure against military threats and attacks. A fundamental characteristic of grand strategy is adaptive planning according to fundamental rule sets spelled out in strategy.⁵¹ Strategy is neither confirmed nor denied by events. Alternately, it is not an objective reality but a desired end state. In strategic planning, certainty about the present and the future is elusive. Certainty is not based on inevitability but centered on military capabilities, flexibility, deployability, and sustainability. To win the War on Terrorism, our hard power capabilities offer the best security protection for America.

New and Changing Global Challenges

No longer can America apply simple procedures to develop a coherent foreign policy. The world is now more complex and the United States needs a strategy to handle different and complex situations. Today, Westphalian concepts are under attack.⁵² Non-interference in another nation's affair has been abandoned in favor of a concept of universal humanitarian intervention such as in Somalia, Kosovo, Bosnia,

East Timor, and Sierra Leone.⁵³ Territory and military power are no longer the most significant elements of national strengths. Technology and economic strength can be obtained without military power. Nuclear weapons make total wars less likely because of the devastation they may engender. Advanced systems of technological education have become a prerequisite for long-term national power. This power allows a state to keep up with advances in science.

Kissinger characterized the use of power in the global information age as consisting of three levels-military, economic, and transnational relations. Globalization is changing traditional geopolitics and can increase opportunities for smaller states to effect international strategy. According to Kissinger, the world now has at least four international systems existing to effect global power-the U.S. versus Western Europe, the great powers of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.⁵⁴ While the U.S. is the predominate military power in the world, the use of military power as a dominate strategy can easily stretch the forces too thin and tie up the military for extended periods of time. The U.S. is strong economically but is rivaled by other power centers who are transforming the world into a multipolar situation. With regards to transnational relations, power is dispersed and the U.S. has limited soft power advantages. Increased soft power means that the U.S. will have an easier time winning multilateral support for operations the U.S. deems vital to U.S. national interests. With multilateral support, the burden, costs, and casualties of operations are shared with other nations. The limitations and risks with multilateral cooperation include that actions cannot be taken without risking collapse of the coalition. Unilateral action by the U.S. is an essential

means as America's security cannot be compromised with tenuous coalition participation when survival interests are at stake.

The decision to use military forces is based on political interests. Department of Defense (DOD) strives to ensure that the United States Government (USG) policies and resources are adequately coordinated to shape the environment and obtain results favorable to U.S. interests.⁵⁵ The terrorist attacks of 9/11 have broadened the scope of DOD contacts, roles, and missions in the interagency arena. In response to the attacks, DOD approved the concept of Joint and Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG) to improve interagency cooperation and improve operational effectiveness for all Regional Combatant Commands.⁵⁶ In the aftermath of 9/11, DOD established U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) to conduct operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and portions of the Gulf of Mexico. NORTHCOM has a homeland defense mission and a defense support to civilian authorities as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense.⁵⁷

Recommendations for a Future Grand Strategy

Some critics of the national security strategy complain that the grand strategy America needs to pursue in the years ahead is not one aimed at a particular threat but rather at restoring its role as the recognized and legitimate leader of the system and rebuilding the institutions and partnerships upon which this leadership position is based.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 reminded the world that national interests and security protections are still crucial in international relations. In the Global War on Terror, some assumptions can be made such as: the threat of terrorism will continue; there are aggressors targeting the U.S.; and there are vulnerable target areas

for terrorist attacks such as with borders, ports, and transportation systems. America must protect the population and infrastructure from terrorist attacks. Consequently, the U.S. must also improve intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination of information. As outlined by the NSS, the U.S. must continue to use all of the elements of national power to include military power to secure America's interest from threat and harm.⁵⁹

Grand strategy encompasses the management of all of the resources of national power-diplomatic, informational, military, and economic means- for the nation to achieve national objectives. Fundamental to grand strategy is the use of military power or hard power to defend and protect America's vital interests. The use of soft power in the form of diplomacy is essential to forge alliances or pressure another nation into compliance to achieve victory without resorting to combat. The effective use of military force includes joint force operations. The future joint force will operate in a complex and uncertain global security environment in which adversaries seek to apply asymmetrical tactics to our perceived vulnerabilities.⁶⁰ International organizations, nation states, rogue states, and terrorist organizations are prominent actors in this environment. Taken together, these elements have led to a shift in the characteristics of joint warfare and crisis resolution. By extension, the joint force's role in the security environment has changed.⁶¹ Grand strategy must continue to work to bring free markets and free trade to every part of the world, because poverty, weak institutions, and corruption contribute to weak states being vulnerable to terrorist networks.⁶² The Bush NSS, echoing his speech at West Point sets tasks that include the use of soft power and hard power.

We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among great powers. To

enhance America's security, we will bolster America's economic prosperity and will promote democracy and human rights abroad.⁶³

Conclusion

At the level of grand strategy, the use of force must now be reconciled with the requirements for national security, both in terms of how force is applied in practice (hard power) and how it is presented (soft power) to domestic and foreign publics. Future grand strategy must guide actions to respond in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. The world is becoming more multilateral in which several hostile states or non-state actors can confront one another, or one in which a number of states, each possessing significant power, can work together on shared interests. We must develop a grand strategy for the future that includes rule sets for encouraging multilateral cooperation among great powers as well as for effectively, responding unilaterally to threats. To protect America's vital interest, we must not hesitate to use military power and unilateral action, if necessary, to act against imminent threats as an appropriate resort.

Endnotes

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